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A study to determine the present status and trend in the area of laboratory experiences prior to student teaching, how soon in the pre-service education program should guided contacts with children begin, who should be responsible for supervising the professional laboratory experiences, and what facilities are needed to provide professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching.

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DEVELOPING A SUGGESTED PROGRAM OF PROFESSIONAL LABORATORY EXPERIENCES PRIOR TO STUDENT TEACHING FOR PROSPECTIVE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS AT MANSFIELD STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

- Clarence L. Hunsicker, Mansfield State Teachers College

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to secure information concerning professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching which should be provided in the in-service education of elementary teachers and to offer a suggested program for Mansfield State Teachers College.

Aspects of the problem include:

1. What is the present status and trend in the area of laboratory experiences prior to student teaching?

2. How soon in the pre-service education program should real, guided contacts with children begin?

3. Who should be responsible for supervising the professional laboratory experiences?

4. What facilities are needed to provide professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching?

Procedure

Information for this study was obtained by (1) a survey of literature, (2) an examination of the present practices in a select group of teacher education institution evaluated by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and (3) a poll of members of the Elementary Department Staff and Elementary Seniors at Mansfield State Teachers College.

Data for the study were gathered by visiting teacher education institutions, members of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, and interviewing the directors of elementary education or other staff member responsible for professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching. Nineteen of these contacts were made by personal visits or interviews. The author was unable to make a personal visit to one institution, and all data from this college were gathered through correspondence.

Through the courtesy of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, twenty member institutions having outstanding programs in professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching, were selected for study. The schools selected were located in Pennsylvania and neighboring states.

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Supporting data for the practices which should be contained in a program of professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching for prospective elementary teachers at Mansfield State Teachers College were gained from a questionnaire poll of the Elementary Department Staff, including both College Instructors and Campus Laboratory School Supervisors.

Additional supporting data for practices which should be contained in a program of laboratory experiences prior to student teaching were gained from a poll of Elementary Seniors at Mansfield State Teachers College, who had completed one semester of student teaching.

A review of the literature and the tabulation and analysis of data obtained from the field study, Elementary Department Staff and Students at Mansfield State Teachers College, furnished the basis for practices in professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching included in the composite list of experiences which was used as a guide in setting up the suggested program.

Conclusions

From the major evidence revealed by the findings of this study, it seems permissible to draw the following conclusions:

1. Information revealed by the study, and suggestions compiled by the author, should provide a starting place for members of the staff to modify and improve the professional laboratory experience program at Mansfield State Teachers College.

2. A program of professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching should vary from institution to institution in terms of the over-all curriculum and the facilities available.

3. There is need for closer relationship between the college instructors and supervisors in the laboratory school.

4. Professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching should be guided and closely supervised.

5. Both on-campus college controlled and off-campus college cooperating schools are being used for professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching.

Applications

The following recommendations for improving professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching in teacher education institutions seem pertinent:

1. That preparation for teaching should include more concern for giving students opportunities for direct laboratory experiences as an integral part of the work of each of the four years of college.

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2. That professional programs provide for guided, professional laboratory experiences including observation of and participation in not only school situations but also community agencies and situations.

3. That the supervision and guidance of the student's professional laboratory experiences prior to student teaching be the joint responsibility of the laboratory teacher and college staff member.

4. That the instructional load of all staff members (laboratory teachers and teachers of college classes) be adjusted to provide for the inclusion of activities with students in laboratory situations.

5. That teacher education institutions, under the guiding influence of research studies, of the judgments and evaluations of students, beginning teachers and staff members, modify their school and community laboratory experience programs on the basis of these evaluations.

6. That there be cooperative action on the part of the Staff at Mansfield State Teachers College to analyze the present professional laboratory experience program with a view of gradually incorporating ideas included in the suggested program of this study.